

SOSANT 2510

Mid-evaluation.

Mid-evaluation took place in focus groups on September 21st, about half-way through the course. About 15 students signed up in advance, for two different groups, but only a handful showed up, some sent emails about needs to cancel. Some of those present had discussed this with others in advance. The focus group meetings took place in Trygve, and students were offered coffee.

I asked for feedback regarding what they were happy with, and where they saw possibilities for improvement. I specifically asked to focus on what could be changed at this stage, for their benefit. (Curriculum, overall course structure etc. was therefore not discussed much).

The students, while only a few, covered the broad range of students who take this course, including Honors MA students as well as BA, and anthropology Bachelor students as well as students from other faculties and departments (e.g. natural science students with no anthropology background). The small group also included both exchange students here for only one semester, and Norwegian BA students who were very familiar with the educational structure at UiO.

Feedback:

The main message was that things are working well. The course is sufficiently well structured, they appreciate the use of examples 'from the field' and they appreciate the use of 'summegrupper' (2-3 students 5 minutes discussing a question) which I have used in most lectures at least once. They also appreciate the use of guest lectures (Andrew Mathews one day), and excursion (Museum of Cultural History). Generally, they found the topic interesting and relevant. Even though some of the articles were seen as very difficult, they found that the lectures helped getting a better understanding of the key points. Lectures were experienced as engaging and easy to follow. For each lecture I write a few paragraphs and some questions on Canvas, and it seemed that students check this in advance. It was also mentioned that the practice of asking students to prepare 1-2 questions for the lecture, (something I did for A Mathews' guest lecture) was very helpful and could be done for every lecture. This is now practiced and added to the Canvas preparation.

Challenges and follow-up:

One of the things that came up, and was unexpected, was anxiety around the exam form. Take home exam/essay (hjemmeeksamen) is a very new format for some, and some expressed uncertainty about what is expected, hence their anxiety. I have followed up by a) talking a bit about what take home exam entails and b) inviting them to produce their own exam questions. This was done in small groups, for about 15 minutes at the end of lecture 6, and they commented that it was both extremely challenging to be asked to come up with exam questions, but also very helpful. The proposed questions (each small group responded by email) are now on Canvas along with questions from previous exams. Since then. I have integrated discussions about what a good exam question might look like (i.e. how can they best demonstrate understanding in relation to the aims of the course), and covered it again in the final lecture. This will hopefully help them prepare and read across topics, practicing the art of making an independent argument based on the curriculum.

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